





February 3, 2021

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

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair
Senate Budget Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, California 95814

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

RE: Invest in Summer/Expanded Learning

Dear President pro Tempore Atkins, Speaker Rendon, Senate Budget Chair Skinner and Assembly Budget Chair Ting:

As a coalition of civil rights, advocacy, community, parent, and student organizations, we respectfully urge the Legislature to rapidly fund evidence-based summer and restorative expanded learning opportunities to benefit the students who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

As the Legislature works to address the dire situation that the pandemic, school closures and uneven distance learning opportunities have caused, we urge you to keep equity foremost in mind. As you are aware, the pandemic has exposed deep inequities in our society, and the most severe impacts of COVID-19 have been borne by those who traditionally have been the most under-resourced and who already were experiencing the highest educational, social, and emotional needs. Students of color, low-income students, LGBTQ youth, foster youth, youth experiencing homelessness, English Learner students, students involved in the juvenile justice system, and students with disabilities have all been disproportionately impacted by school closures and interruptions to essential services.

We believe that providing summer/expanded learning opportunities using evidence-based practices should be a high priority for California. Several research studies, including by [RAND](#) and [PACE](#), have found that providing summer/expanded learning opportunities that integrate academics and enrichment can effectively support academic growth and the social and emotional needs of students. To this end, we urge the Legislature to prioritize an investment in summer/expanded learning in the early action budget package and incorporate the following core provisions:

- **Equity Driven Investments.** *Funding for expanded learning programs should be allocated on the basis of the LEA's proportion of supplemental and concentration funds statewide.* This formula was used effectively to distribute some \$2.9 billion of CARES Act funding in the 2020-21 budget and, we are pleased to see, is reflected in AB 104's proposed distribution. This allocation method ensures that funds are directed to LEAs serving larger populations of high needs students for whom the expanded learning programs and supports are intended. In addition to the groups named in AB 104 (low-income, foster youth, English learners, homeless youth, disengaged students, and migrant pupils), we recommend including students with disabilities and students involved in the juvenile justice system as eligible for services financed by these funds. Moreover, funds for expanded learning should be used for educational services in addition to what LEAs provide with LCFF funds; these dollars should supplement, not supplant LCFF and federal funding. The Governor's allocation of \$1,000 per homeless youth is an important step but, overall, the Governor's proposal is not as equitable as we propose as it includes base funds in its allocation formula. To ensure the public is aware of how the funds were spent and has assurances monies were spent properly, these funds should require fiscal reports and audits with expenditures disaggregated by funding type, including use of any federal stimulus funds and allocations by student subgroups prioritized in the plans.
- **Ensure Enrichment, Rigor and Social Emotional Supports.** *Expanded learning programs should ensure a truly restorative return to school for students.* This means they should not face traditional "drill and kill" summer school style remediation or, at the other extreme, watered down curriculum that devalues a child's education and their potential. Instead, students deserve innovative, rich and engaging learning opportunities that creatively blend

academic supports with enrichment and healing-centered practices. This holistic approach is supported by research on quality summer and expanded learning programs. There is a wealth of research available and LEAs can receive local technical assistance through the Department of Education's System of Support for Expanded Learning to support the feasibility and efficacy of such programs. In line with this vision, *any expanded learning program should also provide tailored social/emotional and mental health supports to redress COVID trauma, both in and outside of classrooms, and utilize a culturally affirming approach to social/emotional support.* In addition, specific strategies for reaching out to, re-engaging and supporting students who are in jeopardy of not graduating (based on indicators such as chronic absenteeism, grades, and staff/family referrals) are critical. A framework of guiding principles for LEA's to provide restorative academic and social emotional learning should be included in any extended learning plan, not merely a list of permissible or encouraged uses as the Governor's budget plan proposes. We cannot afford for LEAs to provide more of the same instructional programs that have failed students during the pandemic. Supplemental instruction and expanded supports must center quality over quantity and include targeted investments for different grade spans.

- **Provide In-Person Support & Empower Parents/Guardians.** *We support offering summer and expanded learning programs in person as an option as soon as can be safely done. To make this possible, we support requiring that school facilities be made available for these programs beginning this summer.* For the most part, distance learning has not been a positive experience for the highest-need students; they would benefit academically and social/emotionally with a return to in-person support. *That said, parents need to be able to continue with a distance learning option if they are not comfortable returning.* This remains a common, though not universal sentiment expressed by many parents and families among our constituents and partners. As such, we do not support at this time a mandatory return to in-person instruction for students and families (only allowing medically fragile students and families the option to continue with distance learning, for example). Instead, we support requiring districts to offer in-person learning while still offering distance learning as an option for families. For families that opt for in-person learning, districts must make school campuses available. The lack of access to school campuses during this school-year has created enormous roadblocks to getting critical services to vulnerable students.
- **Ensure Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement.** *This investment should be aligned with and leverage our existing expanded learning system and system of support that already serves half a million students every year and offers a great deal of infrastructure, experience and knowledge upon which to build. In addition, any expanded learning program should require the engagement of local community partners (e.g., community-based non-profits) in planning and operation of these programs and reimburse them sufficiently so that staff can be paid a living wage and offered benefits.* These partners are critical for identifying and engaging disconnected students and for providing both enrichment activities and social and emotional supports. It is also critical to include the voices of students, families and educators in the development of extended learning plans. Statewide and local task forces

should be established which include these stakeholders to help craft extended learning plans. Any such plans should be vetted with local community stakeholders and subject to a public hearing at a school board meeting prior to adoption. To ensure the engagement of multilingual families, communication about options should be delivered in home languages and in a variety of delivery modes, with literacy levels in mind. County Offices of Education should also be required to approve plans and verify that the requisite community engagement occurred and that the plan details a process for creating a feedback loop with impacted students, parents, and educators. Stakeholders, particularly students, parents, and educators, should also be involved in the ongoing implementation and evaluation of the extended learning plan in alignment with a continuous improvement approach.

- **Multi-Year Investment.** This investment should not be limited to the summer of 2021 and the 2021/2022 school year but should include expanded learning opportunities over multiple school years. While the proposed investments in supplemental supports for students – along with a focus on launching programs this summer – are steps in the right direction, we know the impact of the pandemic and school closures on students will not be ameliorated in a single year. Students will need ongoing, tailored support. In addition, with this commitment, there is an opportunity to continuously improve the quality and impact of the programs for the benefit of students.

We believe that you share our commitment to equity and will do everything possible to help California’s highest-need students recover from and flourish following the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, we urge you to incorporate these recommendations into the state’s expanded learning programs to redress the educational and social emotional harms wrought and exacerbated by the pandemic and to best serve California’s high-need students.

Sincerely,

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