



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 3, 2019

Via Fax: 916-319-2199

The Honorable McCarty, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via Fax: (916) 668-7004

The Honorable Roth, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education
State Capitol, Room 2080
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Special Education Funding – In Support of AB 428

Dear Chairs McCarty and Roth:

On behalf of Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education, we are writing to respectfully request that the ongoing funding proposed for Special Education students in the 2019-20 State Budget proposal be distributed as outlined in Assembly Bill (AB) 428 (Medina, et al).

This funding will help our Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) – Santa Monica-Malibu USD, Culver City USD, and Beverly Hills USD – significantly address myriad Special Education funding issues we face for our most vulnerable student population: children with disabilities.

We concur with several of the findings contained in the 2015 California Special Education Task Force report and recommendations from the Legislative Analyst's Office, which acknowledge the significant Special Education program fiscal challenges faced by school agencies and provide recommendations and actions to improve the system and student outcomes. Both reports include these undisputable facts:

- Special Education expenditures have increased faster than Special Education funding
- Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) base rates are not equitable throughout the state
- The state needs to better support local infant and preschool Special Education programs

We urge the budget subcommittees to approve \$390 million in ongoing Proposition 98 funding to begin phasing in the provisions outlined in AB 428, all of which were recommended by the California Special Education Task Force, including addressing Special Education funding equity by:

- Leveling up base AB 602 funding rates to the 95th percentile over a five-year period while holding harmless those funded above the 95th percentile

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Board of Education: Craig Foster • Oscar de la Torre • Jon Kean • Maria Leon Vazquez Laurie

Lieberman • Ralph Mechur • Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein

Superintendent: Ben Drati

- Establishing a funding formula within AB 602 for programs serving preschoolers with disabilities
- Providing a mechanism within AB 602 that provides additional funding for students with significant high-cost disabilities.

We appreciate the attention given to students with disabilities in the Governor's 2019-20 State Budget proposal, especially when there are few Proposition 98 resources available. We believe the time is right to address the inequity and underfunding of Special Education and begin phasing in funding consistent with AB 428.

With regard to one-time funds, we agree with Governor Gavin Newsom that they would be beneficial for infrastructure—and professional development—investments developed to increase access to inclusive, general education environments. Additional uses could be for training and resources to implement the new California Dyslexia Guidelines resulting from AB 1369 (Chapter 647, Statutes of 2015). These are needs in all California schools, and we would respectfully request these funds be distributed statewide.

All school agencies grapple with increasing mandated Special Education expenditures and decreasing state and federal funding. This important first investment will help every school agency in its efforts to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. Therefore, we strongly support the inclusion of \$390 million in the 2019-20 State Budget through the funding approach outlined in AB 428. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati
Superintendent

cc: Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance
The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California
The Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate President pro Tempore
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the Assembly
The Honorable Shannon Grove, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Marie Waldron, Assembly Republican Leader
The Honorable Jose Medina
Local Legislative Delegation
Jennifer Johnson, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Jeff Bell, Education Program Budget Manager, Department of Finance
Michelle McKay Underwood, Legislative Representative