

REPORT TO THE BOARD

TO: Members of the Board of Education of Alameda Unified School District

FROM: Sean McPhetridge, Ed.D., Superintendent

DATE: April 19, 2017

SUBJECT: Approval of Letter to State Representatives Regarding Impending Budget Cuts to Educational Funding

Context

Governor Jerry Brown submitted his proposed 2017-18 budget to the state legislature on January 10, 2017. Funding for public schools in that budget proposal is based on a projection of lower revenues and reduced spending, and this proposed budget would adversely impact educational funding not only for Alameda Unified School District but also for many other California public school districts. Meanwhile, California continues to fund its public schools at a rate that does not provide funding adequacy for the needs of our citizenry and to support our state economy. According to a report last year by the California School Boards Association, adequate funding for public education would require up to an additional \$42 billion a year, and yet we continue seeing budget cuts instead of increases.

Need for Discussion

AUSD staff requests the Board of Education discuss whether or not it should send a letter to local representatives requesting a meeting to discuss the proposed budget and inadequate funding for K-12 schools. In times like these, when AUSD is forced to make difficult decisions in a time of deficit spending caused by factors outside our control (such as the state increasing costs that school districts and their employees must spend to solve the pension and retirement funding dilemma the state finds itself in), AUSD families and staff are requesting we raise our voices and seek relief from our local state representatives who should make the case for increased funding in order for us to continue delivering strong educational services and to allow us to compensate our staff at reasonable levels.

Fiscal Impact

The Governor's proposed budget provides a Cost of Living Adjustment (The COLA) of 1.48%, which is counted as funding to close the GAP. Originally, there was to be a COLA and a GAP closure of 72.99%, but unfortunately now it is just 23.67% (The COLA), a loss of planned revenues of approximately \$1.5 million for AUSD.

Recommendation

AUSD staff recommends the Board of Education now approve attached letters of request to state representatives Barbara Skinner, Senator (9th District), and Rob Bonta, Member of the California State Assembly (18th District), requesting a meeting to discuss the impact of the Governor's budget on K-12 education and asking them to help develop solutions to support our schools. AUSD staff makes this recommendation upon the request of families and staff who have recently asked us to reach out to local legislators to implore them to provide representation that we need in order to seek and find relief from the state's ongoing inadequate funding of public education.

April 26, 2017

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 2059
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Senator Skinner:

Please know we value your representation of your constituents and your support of public education. Because of the challenges California schools are facing because of proposed funding decreases in a time when state mandates are increasing (e.g., growing PERS and STRS costs being passed onto school districts and employees, increasing costs required to deliver upon state goals for our service delivery for Special Education services, et cetera), please know we depend on you more than ever to represent us in Sacramento and thus want to make you aware of the extremely detrimental effects of the Governor's Proposed Budget on Alameda Unified School District.

The Governor's Proposed Budget provides a Cost of Living Adjustment of 1.48%, which is counted as funding to close the GAP. Originally while there was to be a COLA and a GAP closure of 72.99%, unfortunately now it is just 23.67% (The COLA), a loss of planned revenues of \$1.5 million for Alameda Unified School District.

This loss of funding will be very difficult for our district and for many others to endure, causing us to begin a cycle of budget reductions yet again. Anyone reading the local news knows that this is negatively impacting many cities and school districts now forced to make cuts because of the increased demands by (and decreased support from) the state. This is extremely demoralizing to schools not just in your legislative district but also across the state, and these cuts are detrimental to our students and staff, especially when we thought the state was making progress toward making good on its promise of increasing funding to public education as is required of us now.

As you know, public school districts are expected to absorb the increased costs for PERS and STRS retirement contributions in years ahead, and many believe that this is an imminent crisis for public education and indeed for the state as a whole. Districts around the state are scrambling to make cuts to services to students because of the state passing on these increased costs while the state is now threatening decreased contributions to districts. Sadly school districts are forced to make cuts to services to our students so we can make these contributions, and both families and school employees are suffering as a result of the inadequate planning by California legislators who have failed to provide us with a reasonable way to implement the goal of pension and retirement reforms.

Although it is obvious there are always great challenges in balancing the state's budget each year, please know the great gains our students have made should not be put at risk. If we expect to deliver upon the gains we have made (e.g., increased graduation rates, decreased rates of out-of-school suspensions, et cetera), the state must provide adequate funding for public schools to do so. Considering California is the sixth largest economy in the world, funding inadequacy for public education is not just a state economic crisis but indeed a national economic crisis. Please remember we educate one out of ten Americans in this state, and by inadequately funding public schools, the Governor and state legislators are risking the things that make us the Great State of California. Meanwhile, please understand this is not just an economic crisis but a social justice crisis as we educate more immigrants and more students of color than any other state in the United States. We cannot stand silent and allow this to occur.

Please know our students and our schools greatly need your support. We would like to meet with you to discuss this challenge in more detail. You have spoken in the past about the need to do things differently, including the need for us to fix the commercial property tax loopholes that exist in Prop 13. According to a recent report by the California School Boards Association, funding adequacy in this state will require approximately \$40 billion in additional funding annually, and we all know that we will need to do much more than just fix Prop 13 loopholes or impose other newly proposed taxes to fix this problem. Inadequate funding for public education in California is a problem that is getting worse each day, and thus we hope you will agree to meet with us to discuss how you can help advocate on the behalf of the constituents who voted for you and who depend on you to represent us in deliberations with the Governor going regarding our need to adequately fund public education in California.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to being in touch with your office soon.

Respectfully,

Gary K. Lym, President

Gray Harris, Vice President

Ardella Dailey, Ed.D., Clerk

Anne McKereghan, Trustee

Jennifer Williams, Trustee

April 26, 2017

The Honorable Rob Bonta
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, California 94249-0018

Dear Assembly Member Bonta:

Please know we value your representation of your constituents and your support of public education. Because of the challenges California schools are facing because of proposed funding decreases in a time when state mandates are increasing (e.g., growing PERS and STRS costs being passed onto school districts and employees, increasing costs required to deliver upon state goals for our service delivery for Special Education services, et cetera), please know we depend on you more than ever to represent us in Sacramento and thus want to make you aware of the extremely detrimental effects of the Governor's Proposed Budget on Alameda Unified School District.

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Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to being in touch with your office soon. Because you and your family were personally plaintiffs in the Robles v. Wong lawsuit, please know we appreciate your understanding of systematic funding inadequacy in California public education, and we continue to be grateful to you for showing leadership in Sacramento to help make the case for adequate funding for our schools.

Respectfully,

Gary K. Lym, President

Gray Harris, Vice President

Ardella Dailey, Ed.D., Clerk

Anne McKereghan, Trustee

Jennifer Williams, Trustee