



May 25, 2015

Dear Governor Brown,

We are writing on behalf of the approximately 51,000 students of Capistrano Unified School District. While we support and applaud your efforts to close the achievement gap and address the acute needs of English language learners, low-income and foster youth, **we strongly urge you and the legislature to ensure an adequate and appropriate education for every public school student in California by raising the LCFF base funding.**

The basic structure of LCFF is a good one, and we support both the simplification of our education finance system along with the local control component. However, the timing of LCFF coincided with our district coming off historic, five consecutive years of budget cuts totaling \$149 million or 37% from our highest budget year of 2007-08 (when our annual budget was nearly \$398 million). Since then, our student enrollment has changed very little—we remain the ninth largest district in the state; yet our student services have been cut to the core and our class sizes have never been higher, with many classes at both the elementary and secondary levels near 40 students and some even larger.

Our first year LCFF per student funding in 2013-14 of \$6,368 was substantially lower than the statewide district average of \$8,341. Furthermore, California's statewide average is substantially lower than the national per pupil funding average of \$12,281. Consistent with this trend, Capistrano Unified's projected LCFF per student funding of \$7,381 for the 2015-16 school year is significantly lower than both the state and national averages. With 24% of our district's students classified as English learners, low income and foster youth, our Superintendent Kirsten Vital and her staff must divert a significant portion of the district's budget to support our high-need students, thereby lowering the district's average per student funding even more.

The inadequacy of current base funding is further exacerbated by the fact that the LCFF formula is not targeting many of the very students you intended to help. As you are well aware, Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was established to ensure equity for all by increasing access to a high quality education. To that end, Title 1 currently provides supplemental funding to schools where high-need students constitute 40 percent or more of enrollment. In contrast, instead of the school level, the LCFF concentration grants are determined at the often exponentially larger and more diffuse district level. Unfortunately, **for 15,000 high-need students in Orange County — a full seven percent of the county's high-need student population — this means they are getting lost in the formula.**

According to a March 2015 study by the Public Policy Institute of California, "the biggest cause for concern" with the effectiveness of LCFF lies within districts that have relatively low overall shares of high-need students that are unevenly distributed across schools. The study warns that "an additional potential problem is that these students are in high-need schools but not in high-need districts, and therefore do not generate concentration funding." Statewide there are 677

schools in 154 districts above the 55 percent threshold that do not receive concentration funding because their districts are below the LCFF threshold as currently set.

Capistrano Unified schools have the state's highest concentrations of high-needs students not in high-need districts. For example, Kinoshita Elementary has 97.5 percent high-needs students and Richard Henry Dana Elementary has 91 percent high-needs students — in contrast to 24 percent high-need students district-wide. While children at these school sites face obstacles similar to those at elementary schools in Santa Ana Unified, including poverty and English proficiency, they do not receive any concentration grant funding under the LCFF. When such an inequity in funding for our school site concentrations of high-need students is layered on top of the base grant inequity that was grandfathered into the LCFF, the ability for Capistrano Unified to deliver resources for all students to access a high quality education is challenging to say the least.

National PTA has collaborated with the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) to educate parents about a forward-thinking education framework that combines core academics and 21st century themes with life and career skills such as **communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Information, media, and technology** skills also ensure that students participate responsibly and successfully in the digital world. While it seems clear that such a comprehensive, dynamic learning approach is beneficial if not crucial for California's students, the cost of curriculum, materials, assessments, professional development and technology must be addressed. How can we provide our kids with a 21st century education when our long-term LCFF projections will simply return us to 2007-08 funding levels? Can this possibly be considered adequate? PTA has consistently maintained that to provide a quality, modern education we must raise the base funding for every student. We ask you to consider the future, and the overwhelming impact of every child receiving a 21st century education for our families, our communities, our businesses, and our state.

While we wholeheartedly support the aims of LCFF to provide the resources necessary for all students to succeed in school, **we at CUCPTSA — as parent advocates for the children of Capistrano Unified and all the children of this state — urge you and the legislature to fund LCFF at a higher base grant level that is truly adequate and appropriate for all of California's students.**

Thank you for your time and consideration,
CUCPTSA Legislative/Advocacy Team 2014-15