



March 21, 2024

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The Honorable Anna M. Caballero, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

CC

Senator Brian Jones, Vice Chair
Senator Angelique Ashby
Senator Josh Becker

Senator Steven Bradford
Senator Kelly Seyarto
Senator Aisha Wahab

Re: SB 1338 (Smallwood-Cuevas) Education finance: emergencies:
apportionments: COVID-19: Culver City Unified School District - **SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Caballero and Committee Members;

I am proud to inform you that the Culver City Democratic Club (CCDC) membership has voted unanimously to endorse SB 1338 (Smallwood-Cuevas). This bill would exempt Culver City Unified School District (CCUSD) from penalties due to an emergency closure of its schools in January 2022 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 emergency and the denial by the California Department of Education of the district's J13-A waiver request.

During this period of significant surge of COVID, CCUSD faced a dire shortage of adult personnel due to illness among its faculty and staff. On January 11 and 12, the district reported 20 unfilled classes, resulting in approximately 700 non-supervised students being housed in multi-purpose rooms and the cafeteria. Despite these daunting circumstances, CCUSD took decisive action to ensure the safety and well-being of its students and staff while adhering to state regulations and guidelines.

Before making the decision to close its schools, CCUSD engaged in thorough consultation with key stakeholders, including the Los Angeles County Office of Education, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, the



California Department of Public Health, the local Parent-Teachers Association, and its local bargaining units. Input was actively sought from all of these entities, and they were all informed prior to a decision being made. Unfortunately, the required communication to the California Department of Education did not occur until after the district had taken action to close its schools. By any measure, the actions taken by Culver City USD constituted substantial compliance with the law.

In January 2022, there were 3,912 people hospitalized with COVID-19 in LA County. Testing results were available for nearly 10,442,400 individuals, with 18% of people testing positive and a daily positivity rate of 20.4%.

These figures underscore the severity of the situation faced by CCUSD and the broader community during the peak of the Omicron epidemic. Despite the overwhelming challenges posed by the surge in cases, CCUSD's response exemplified resilience, resourcefulness, and a steadfast commitment to prioritizing the health and safety of its students and staff. Importantly, it should be noted that the closure did exactly what health officials required at the time: taking all action to stop the spread of the virus.

CCUSD should not be penalized for protecting the health of our students and staff. CCUSD continues to show great academic progress despite COVID-19 learning loss; student gains in both English language arts and math in Culver City exceeded those in both LA County and statewide. Additionally, during this crisis with limited time to move swiftly, CCUSD gained the support from key stakeholders to move forward with the closures. CCUSD should be exempt from this penalty fee. Given the state budget prospect and COVID funds expiring in June 2024, these funds are now needed more than ever.

We urge the education committee to vote 'aye.'

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leah Pressman".

Leah Pressman
Chair, Politics & Legislative
Committee
Culver City Democratic Club

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Haifaa Moammar".

Haifaa Moammar
Corresponding Secretary
Culver City Democratic Club

