

YOUR SELPA/LEA/PERSONAL LETTERHEAD

Governor Gavin Newsom
Office of the Governor of the State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA. 95814

Senator Nancy Skinner, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator John Laird, Chair
Senate Subcommittee 1 on Ed Finance
1021 O Street, Suite 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Phil Ting, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
1020 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, Chair
Assembly Subcommittee 2 on Ed Finance
1020 O Street, Suite 4250
Sacramento, CA 95814

May XX, 2022

RE: Governor's 2022-23 State Budget May Revision Language on Educationally-Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS)

Dear Governor Newsom and Senate and Assembly Committee Leadership:

I am writing to urge you to remove the proposal in the budget bill that shifts allocations of federal and state educationally-related mental health services (ERMHS) dollars from special education local plan areas (SELPA) to local educational agencies (LEAs) effective July 1, 2022. I am concerned this will create significant, immediate disruption to mental health services for thousands of students with disabilities across California.

ERMHS programming and services are provided by either a single district that is its own SELPA, by a school district or charter school that receives all of its ERMHS funds from its SELPA under its existing allocation plan, or by a SELPA consortium of districts who agree to provide these programs and services in an economy of scale. Multi-district SELPAs that pool their resources do so to ensure a full continuum of high-quality mental health services are available to students with disabilities, which may include interagency coordination, professional development, recruitment and staffing, assessment and consultation, service monitoring, and reviews of more restrictive wraparound and residential services. This proposal would immediately void prior commitments made in those SELPAs who have established ERMHS allocation plans, putting at risk the ability of many districts and charters to continue to provide a full continuum of mental health services at all.

What appears to be merely a funding shift will in fact make it harder for some of our most vulnerable students to access mental health programs and services. Any major policy changes related to ERMHS programming should be vetted by the special education program experts who coordinate, provide, and operate these programs and services for students pursuant to AB 114. And, consideration of any ERMHS proposals should occur by way of the typical legislative process, in

order to afford parents, students, and educators the opportunity for public comment so decision-makers may learn how proposed changes will directly impact the people they represent.

To ensure the Governor and the Legislature are fully informed about the real-life consequences of these recommendations, I ask the Legislature to reject the current ERMHS proposals and instead consider studying current ERMHS programs and services to determine whether shifting funding as proposed would truly be in the best interests of students with disabilities with intensive mental health needs, their families, and the LEAs who serve them. The Legislature should also study the effects of ERMHS funding flexibility provided less than two years ago and consider whether that flexibility should continue going forward.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

YOUR SIGNATURE

Your Title Or Role

CC: Your Local Representatives