March 30, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

We request that your administration work with the Legislature to ensure that local educational agencies (LEAs) and charter schools are held accountable for providing meals and instruction to California students during the school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Your March 13th Executive Order ensures that LEAs and charter schools continue to receive funding for the purpose of providing meals and instruction to students, but it does not require that these services be provided. In the absence of such a requirement, and in the absence of any fiscal consequence for non-compliance, it appears that provision of these critical services has been uneven around the state.

Many LEAs and charter schools are going to extraordinary lengths under highly challenging circumstances to ensure that students are receiving meals and are receiving instruction. However, we are concerned that this is not the case for all students.

According to data provided by the California Department of Education (CDE), prior to the crisis, approximately 1,300 school districts, county offices, and charter schools were providing meals through the National School Lunch Program. As of March 24th, only 55% of them have applied to the CDE to provide meals during the school closures. Additional school districts and charter schools are applying to CDE for approval to participate, but we are concerned that some school districts and charter schools have insufficient plans, or no plans at all, to provide meals to children during this critical time.

Statewide data regarding instruction is not available, but it appears that not all LEAs have a plan in place to begin instruction by teachers. Voluntary or “enrichment” activities are not sufficient
during these long-term school closures. Of particular concern are high school students who need to earn credit for graduation and to fulfill A-G course requirements.

We recognize that the causes of these problems are numerous and complex, and that LEAs and charter schools are operating under many constraints. We would welcome the opportunity to work with your administration to ensure that these critical services are provided to all California students in an expeditious manner.

Thank you for all of the efforts of your administration to support schools during these unprecedented school closures.

Sincerely,

Patrick O'Donnell, 70th Assembly District
Laura Friedman, 43rd Assembly District
Jim Frazier, 11th Assembly District
Mark Levine, 10th Assembly District
Cristina Garcia, 58th Assembly District
Eduardo Garcia, 56th Assembly District
Mark Stone, 29th Assembly District
Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, 16th Assembly District
Autumn Burke, 62nd Assembly District
Kevin McCarty, 7th Assembly District
Mark Berman, 24th Assembly District
Luz Rivas, 39th Assembly District
William Brough, 73rd Assembly District

Frank Bigelow, 5th Assembly District
Jesse Gabriel, 45th Assembly District
Wendy Carrillo, 51st Assembly District
Ed Chau, 49th Assembly District
Marie Waldron, 75th Assembly District
Robert Rivas, 30th Assembly District
Jose Medina, 61st Assembly District
Susan Talamantes Eggman, 13th Assembly District
David Chiu, 17th Assembly District
Reginald Jones-Sawyer, 59th Assembly District
Cottie Petrie-Norris, 74th Assembly District
Blanca Rubio, 48th Assembly District

CC:
Honorable Tony Thurmond, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Linda Darling Hammond, President, State Board of Education
Ben Chida, Chief Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Governor’s Office
Karen Stapf Walters, Executive Director, State Board of Education
Keely Martin Bosler, Director of Finance
Jennifer Johnson, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Governor’s Office