

PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLLABORATION WITH SENATOR JACK SCOTT
ON SENATE BILL (SB) 1275

The Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Staff and Board Members met with Senator Scott, Assemblyperson Liu and a representative from Supervisor Antonovich's office in October to provide information and ask for support through legislation to address the financial burden on districts that have a disproportionately high number of children in out of home placements. The result was Senator Scott introducing SB 1275 to address the challenges of out of home placement into districts.

DISTRICT CHALLENGE:

The disproportionately high number of children in out of home care placements within the boundaries of the Pasadena Unified School District is the result of historical land values that attracted single family and group foster care operations to be established with zero regard for the impact on the local school district. Altadena and Pasadena have the full range of out of home placements and all of these greatly impact services, staff and funding demands on the Pasadena Unified School District. Students are placed into licensed childrens' institutions (LCI's), small group homes, foster family homes, intermediate care facilities, community care facilities as well as with individual families and/or those with kinship relationships. A number of local mental health providers also operate Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) which increase the community's burden of out of home placements. Placing agencies are the Department of Children/Family Services and the Department of Developmental Services.

PUSD has a disproportionate number of children placed into out of home beds and is, in fact, more impacted than any other district in the State. A study done by FCMAT, an independent group, noted that PUSD has an atypical percentage of students identified with emotional disturbances (statewide average is 4 %, PUSD is 10.76%) due to the number of students placed into the Licensed Children's Institutions (LCI), group homes, foster families, etc. Students are placed into nonpublic schools (NPS) when the District cannot serve the students in their school programs due to emotional and behavioral problems. Of the students requiring placement into NPS, over 80 % reside in LCIs or foster homes. The staffing and support for these out of home students is a tremendous cost to the District without any additional funds for support. The percentage of students receiving special education services is also greatly impacted by the out of home placed students. FCMAT reports that 12.56% of the District's special education population resides in foster homes and LCIs. While we meet our obligation to educate and serve all students living or placed within our boundaries, it creates a huge drain for the district with costs far in excess of funding.

SB 1275 was introduced on behalf of PUSD by Senator Scott in January. District staff worked with Scott's office in the wording of the bill. In late April, Senator Scott's office notified the District that they were dropping the bill. The current political climate, lack of support from the legislative analyst office and CDE prevented them from proceeding in a way that would be meaningful to the field.



Special Education Local Plan Area Administrators

May 8, 2006

Dianne Feinstein
Washington DC 20515

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RE: Funding for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Dear Senator Feinstein,

This letter is written on behalf of the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Administrators Organization of California. The SELPA Organization represents all of California's school districts and the state's 682,000 students with disabilities. We are writing to express our grave concerns regarding the final Congressional appropriations bill for 2006 (HR 3010) for education that was signed into law by the President. For the first time in over ten years, this bill reduces funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

When Congress reauthorized IDEA in 2004, there was a renewed schedule of significant federal funding increases and a promise by Congress and the President to provide those yearly increases in federal funding to finally attain 40% of the average per pupil expenditure. A day after Congress approved IDEA 2004 it approved an education appropriations bill that provided only a \$520 million increase in funding rather than the \$2.1 billion required by the IDEA. At the same time Congress passed a bill giving \$73 billion in tax breaks to corporations. For FY 2006, instead of the \$2.3 billion increase required by IDEA 2004 Congress provided only a \$100 million increase. After the 1% across the board rescission for domestic programs, IDEA funding will actually be reduced by \$15 million. The FY 2006 appropriation level will actually reduce the current percentage provided to schools from 18.6% to 17.8%, resulting in a significant local shortfall at a time when federal requirements for IDEA have increased and as a result special education program costs are increasing substantially. **THIS IS A NATIONAL DISGRACE!**

Twenty-six years ago, the federal government was to provide on-going funding for special education at the full 40% level, but it has never even reached the 20% level. The lack of adequate funding for special education will only exacerbate the problems of the rising costs of special education. Students with disabilities are being seriously shortchanged. We intend to make everyone in California aware of the total lack of commitment by the Congress and the President to students with disabilities and to fully fund the IDEA.

We urge Congress and the President to reorganize your priorities to fully fund special education programs as first promised in IDEA 2004 and to keep your promise and commitment to students with disabilities.

Sincerely,


Judith Barhydt
Pasadena Unified SELPA