



April 5, 2024

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget and
Fiscal Review
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget
and Fiscal Review, Subcommittee No.
1 on Education
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 1 on Education Hearing on
April 11, 2024; Golden State Teacher Grant Program**

Dear Chairs Wiener and Laird:

On behalf of our organizations representing students, parents, community members, advocates, and educators across California, we write to express our opposition to any proposed changes in upcoming revisions to the state budget that would reduce or eliminate spending on the Golden State Teacher Grant (GSTG), a high-demand grant program managed by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) for prospective candidates working towards earning their preliminary teaching or pupil personnel services credential.

As with most issues facing our public schools, the difficulty of staffing qualified educators is felt most acutely by schools serving children in marginalized communities. Access to high-quality, effective teachers in California is inequitably unavailable for children of

April 5, 2024

color, children with disabilities, English learners, children from low-income communities, and children who live at the intersections of these identities. The GSTG program helps address this inequity by requiring prospective candidates in a professional preparation program approved by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to work in a school with a high concentration of students from low-income communities, English Learners, and foster youth for at least four years after receiving certification.

Any budget proposals that aim to reduce or eliminate spending on the GSTG program will upend the progress California has made on preparing and placing new teachers to teach in schools serving a high percentage of vulnerable children. Due to the popularity of the GSTG program, the one-time \$500 million general allocation of funds are estimated to be exhausted by the 2024-25 school year.¹ According to CSAC, the number of awards granted through the GSTG program has increased each year since its inception in the 2020-21 school year.² Too often, the state eliminates investments in successful teacher grant programs when there is a clear need and interest from teacher candidates. California legislators have a responsibility to children in the state, especially children who attend schools that are disproportionately low-income, to ensure that they have access to credentialed, well-prepared teachers to create a high-quality learning environment. There is a clear need to protect investments in programs that ensure more teachers are serving students across the state.

Critically, any reduction in funding for the GSTG program would conflict with the important mission of addressing the inequitable impact of the teacher shortage on California's highest-need schools and exacerbate the inequities faced by those schools and the children they serve. It is essential that California continues to invest in programs that ensure well-prepared teachers are staffed in the highest need schools across the state so that students from the most vulnerable communities have access to teachers in their classrooms. If you share our view that any reduction or elimination of spending on the GSTG program is misaligned with the needs of the students in high-need schools, and with the equity values of our state, we hope you will protect these investments as you consider revisions in the budget proposal.

We strongly encourage you to protect investments in the GSTG program.

Sincerely,

¹ The GSTG program is available through June 2026 or until the one-time \$500 million general allocation of funds are exhausted. Legislative Analyst's Office. The 2023-24 Budget: California Student Aid Commission Gabriel Petek, February 2023. <https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2023/4702/CSAC-022323.pdf>.

² According to CSAC, in the 2020-21 school year, 489 GSTG awards were granted; in the 2021-22 school year, 2,717 GSTG awards were granted; in the 2022-23 school year, 7,716 GSTG awards were granted; and in the 2023-24 school year (as of December 2023), 5,999 GSTG awards were granted.

April 5, 2024

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CC: The Honorable Members of Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 1 on
Education