



February 29, 2024

Superintendent Carvalho & Board of Education
Los Angeles Unified School District
via email

Dear Superintendent Carvalho and Honorable Board Members:

As the largest school district in California and a model for large urban school districts nationwide, we are writing this letter to urge LA Unified to prioritize equity and protect highest-need students and communities as you approach this consequential budget season for the upcoming 2024-25 school year.

In 2013, after a decade of communities organizing for equity at the state level, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was enacted to restore education funding to pre-recession levels in an equitable manner. Governor Brown’s rationale for LCFF was clear, “**equal treatment for children in unequal situations is not justice**”¹. Soon after, in 2014, LA Unified led by co-creating and implementing the Student Equity Need Index (SENI) with students, parents, and community members, a tool to allocate resources to schools to better support highest-need students and address the achievement gap. Almost a decade later, the district proudly lists equity as a core belief in its 2022-26 Strategic Plan and declares that “we will strategically allocate resources to our students and families to ensure that students are celebrated and supported”².

We understand the tenuous economic circumstances the district is facing right now; the uncertainty of California’s state budget, the expiration of COVID-19 relief funds, declining enrollment, and structural deficits are looming. History has taught us that during previous economic downturns, one-size-fits-all approaches to remedy budget concerns have had inequitable impacts on highest-need schools (Reed v. State of California³). A universal approach to budget balancing only further compounds the challenging circumstances that highest-need schools already face. **We urge LA Unified to prioritize equity and not take the same one-size-fits-all approach when considering the tough decisions that need to be made to**

¹ <https://edsource.org/2013/brown-lashes-out-at-regulators-and-testers-makes-case-for-his-reforms/26074>

² <https://www.lausd.org/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/1371/Strategic-Plan22-26.pdf>

³ [Reed v. California, 2010](#)

ensure long-term fiscal stability, particularly as it considers how policy decisions impact highest-need schools' budgets (staffing, budget carryover, et al.).

Budget and policy decisions that fail to differentiate for the unique needs of the 283 highest-need schools in LA Unified are not inconsequential but rather potentially inequitable and destabilizing, resulting in further harm to the students and schools that benefit the most from budget and staffing stability. **Now more than ever, it is vital that LA Unified takes actionable steps to demonstrate its core belief of equity by interrupting the course of history and committing to prioritizing stable, long-term, adequate funding to meet the unique needs of highest-need schools. This includes the protection of SENI and ensuring the \$700 million investment is a permanent and stable funding source beyond the 2024-2025 school year, which empowers schools to make their own unique budget decisions to close persisting opportunity gaps.** Budgets are moral documents - the tough budget decisions ahead serve as an opportunity for LA Unified to continue to serve as a model for the state and the nation as to how to uphold an uncompromising commitment to prioritize equity.

Together, we represent civil rights, advocacy, students, parents, educators, and other organizations that work tirelessly to advocate for equity locally and in Sacramento. We are committed to ensuring LCFF and SENI live up to their promise of equity and prioritize the highest-need students, particularly during consequential times. We look forward to partnering with you to champion and protect the highest-need students.

Signed,



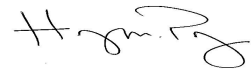
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